**Common Core Middle School**

**Informational Writing Units**

**8th grade**

**Professional Develop Module**

**Handouts**

**Informational Essay Rubric – Explaining a Cause and Effect Phenomenon**

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| **Element** | **Advanced** | **On-Target** | **Novice** |
| **Content** | The writer:   * Presents the central idea in the introductory paragraph of the essay, laying out all causes and effects of the chosen event/issue. * Thoughtfully presents each cause and each effect, always using details, quotations, examples, and statistics. * Always carefully analyzes each cause and each effect to explain its role in the cause-effect phenomenon. * Consistently makes clear and explains the relationship between particular causes and effects. * Uses the concluding paragraph to examine probable future effects in a complex way that points to an understanding of this phenomenon’s broader impact on the world. | The writer:   * Presents the central idea in the introductory paragraph of the essay, laying out most causes and effects of the chosen event/issue. * Presents each cause and each effect, often using details, quotations, examples, and statistics. * Usually analyzes each cause and each effect to explain its role in the cause-effect phenomenon. * Makes clear and explains the relationship between most causes and effects. * Uses the concluding paragraph to examine some probable future effects. | The writer:   * Presents an incomplete central idea in the introductory paragraph of the essay, laying out only the causes or only the effects of the chosen event/issue. * Presents causes and effects, but rarely uses details, quotations, examples, and statistics. * Does not analyze each cause and each effect to explain its role in the cause-effect phenomenon; or the analysis is illogical. * Does not explain the relationship between causes and effects. * Uses the concluding paragraph only to summarize previously made points and/or presents absolute effects as though they are inevitable. |
| **Organization** | * The chosen structure is the most effective means of explaining this cause-effect phenomenon to illustrate the relationship between all causes and all effects. * The use of signal words and phrases always makes clear the line of reasoning and always creates a logical flow between sentences and paragraphs. * Each paragraph has a clear central idea that is presented in the topic sentence. | * The chosen structure is the most effective means of explaining this cause-effect phenomenon to illustrate the relationship between all causes and all effects. * The use of signal words and phrases usually makes clear the line of reasoning and often creates a logical flow between sentences and paragraphs. * Most paragraphs have a clear central idea that is presented in the topic sentence. | * The chosen structure is not the most effective means of explaining this cause-effect phenomenon to illustrate the relationship between all causes and all effects; or there is no clear structure to the essay. * Signal words and phrases are rarely or never used to make clear the line of reasoning or to create a logical flow between sentences and paragraphs. * Few paragraphs have a clear central idea that is presented in the topic sentence. |

**(continued on next page)**

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| **Style & Mechanics** | * Writing voice is engaging and consistently appropriate for the intended audience. * The word choice is specific to the chosen topic. * Sentence structures are varied and complex. * The essay contains no errors in spelling or punctuation. | * Writing voice is engaging and usually appropriate for the intended audience. * The word choice is somewhat specific to the * Writing voice is engaging and usually appropriate for the intended audience. * The word choice is somewhat specific to the   chosen topic.   * Sentence structures are often varied and sometimes complex. * The essay contains minimal spelling and punctuation errors. | * Writing voice is not engaging or is not appropriate for the intended audience. * The word choice is not specific to the chosen topic. * Writing voice is not engaging or is not appropriate for the intended audience. * The word choice is not specific to the chosen topic. * Sentence structures are not varied or complex. * The essay contains multiple spelling or punctuation errors. |
| **Process Checklist** | The writer:   * Brainstormed to discover multiple topics and selected one suited to the writing task. * Sorted information into logical categories. * Drafted to organize and analyze information. * Revised his/her draft to achieve greater coherency and clarity. * Edited for clarity and an error-free essay. | |

**Informational Writing Unit Progression**

**Research Progression 6th -> 7th -> 8th**

**Mentor Text Annotations – Organizational Patterns**

*Annotate the passage below to identify moments when the following organizational patterns are used:*

* *Cause & Effect*
* *Chronological reporting of key events (summary & description)*
* *Compare/Contrast*

*Underline key words and phrases that point to these organizational patterns.*

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Annotations** | **excerpt from “Hurricane Katrina” *The New York Times*  (updated Sept. 25, 2012)** |
| Chronological/cause  Cause & Effect -effects    description  effects  description  effects – short and long-term | Hurricane Katrina struck the Gulf Coast with devastating force at daybreak on Aug. 29, 2005, pummeling a region that included the fabled city of New Orleans and heaping damage on neighboring Mississippi. In all, more than 1,700 people were killed and hundreds of thousands of others displaced.  Packing 145-mile-an-hour winds as it made landfall, the category 3 storm left more than a million people in three states without power and submerged highways even hundreds of miles from its center. The hurricane’s storm surge — a 29-foot wall of water pushed ashore when the hurricane struck the Gulf Coast — was the highest ever measured in the United States. Levees failed in New Orleans, resulting in political and social upheavals that continued a half-decade later.  Katrina ranks as one of the most punishing hurricanes ever to hit the United States. Damage, costing billions of dollars, has made it one of the costliest storms on record. In New Orleans, floodwaters from the breached levee rose to rooftops in the poorest neighborhood, and in many areas residents were rescued from roofs of homes that became uninhabitable. The hurricane’s howling winds stripped 15-foot sections off the roof of the Superdome, where as many as 10,000 evacuees had taken shelter. An [exodus](http://www.nytimes.com/2005/09/11/national/nationalspecial/11diaspora.html?scp=11&sq=hurricane+katrina+exodus&st=nyt) of hundreds of thousands left the city, many becoming refugees, finding shelter with nearby relatives or restarting their lives in states as far away as Massachusetts and Utah.  The head of the Federal Emergency Management Agency, Michael D. Brown, was stripped of his post amid fears within the Bush administration that its delayed response to the disaster could do lasting damage to both President George W. Bush’s power and his legacy. But more important to some members of the administration, it dented the administration’s aura of competence. In the end, the federal government’s response was seen as too little and too late.  Seven years to the week after Hurricane Katrina, New Orleans was hit by another potentially deadly storm. Isaac was a Category 1 hurricane that caused severe flooding through a wide area of Louisiana and Mississippi. In New Orleans, though, the the $14.5 billion in [levee](http://topics.nytimes.com/top/news/science/topics/dams_and_dikes/index.html?inline=nyt-classifier) defenses put in place since 2005 [passed its first test.](http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=9802E1D9133FF934A3575AC0A9649D8B63) But a Category 1 storm with surges of 10 to 14 feet [presented challenges less severe](http://www.nytimes.com/2012/08/30/us/army-corps-monitors-water-levels-and-levees-in-new-orleans-with-hurricane-isaac.html) than the new ring of defenses were designed to meet. |

**Developing a Research Question**

Consider:

* What is the organizational pattern?
* What is the topic?

Example: The Sinking of the Titanic

**Sift & Sort Activity**

**INFORMATION SET (8th grade)**

* “Two-thirds in this ABC News/Washington Post poll say the federal government should have been better prepared to deal with a storm this size, and three-quarters say state and local governments in the affected areas likewise were insufficiently prepared” (Langer).
* “As Katrina threatened the Gulf Coast, Louisiana Gov. Kathleen Blanco issued a state of emergency on Aug. 26 and on Aug. 28 sent a letter to President Bush requesting a disaster declaration for the state in order to release federal assistance. "I have determined that this incident will be of such severity and magnitude that effective response will be beyond the capabilities of the state and affected local governments and that supplementary federal assistance will be necessary," Blanco wrote in her letter” (Shoup).
* “FEMA provided housing assistance (rental assistance, [trailers](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/FEMA_Trailer), etc.) to more than 700,000 applicants—families and individuals. However, only one-fifth of the trailers requested in Orleans Parish were supplied, resulting in an enormous housing shortage in the city of New Orleans” (Wikipedia).
* “On Sunday, Aug. 28th, the day before Hurricane Katrina hit, FEMA issued a storm report that included several dire predictions, including that a direct hit by the storm could leave the city submerged by several feet of water and that ‘at least 100,000 people in the city lack the transportation to get out of town’” (Lipton).
* “In July 2005, at an emergency planning session sponsored by FEMA, state and local officials discussed evacuation planning for a possible hurricane in the region, which all parties recognized could cause thousands, if not tens of thousands of deaths. At the meeting, there was a consensus that they were far from ready, as only about 10 percent of the planning was finished evacuation of the estimated 100,000 people who did not have cars or other means of getting out of the city” (Lipton).
* “Soon after Katrina made landfall, State and local authorities understood the devastation was serious but, due to the destruction of infrastructure and response capabilities, lacked the ability to communicate with each other and coordinate a response…State and local governments are best positioned to address incidents in their jurisdictions and will always play a large role in disaster response” (Federal Response”).
* “In November 2009, Judge Stanwood Duval Jr. of federal District Court ruled that poor maintenance of a major navigation channel, the [Mississippi River](http://topics.nytimes.com/top/news/national/usstatesterritoriesandpossessions/mississippi-river/index.html?inline=nyt-geo)-Gulf Outlet or MR-GO, by the Army Corps of Engineers led to some of the worst flooding after the hurricane” (“Hurricane Katrina”).
* “Majorities ranging from 56 percent to 79 percent express criticism of federal efforts at delivering food and water, evacuating displaced people, controlling looting and (especially) dealing with the price of gasoline” (Langer).
* “Of the 60,000 people stranded in New Orleans, the Coast Guard rescued more than 33,500. Congress recognized the Coast Guard's response with an official entry in the Congressional Record, and the [Armed Service](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Military_of_the_United_States) was awarded the Presidential Unit Citation” (Wikipedia).
* “As New Orleans descended into chaos, with widespread looting and other crimes, officials from the F.B.I., which is part of the Department of Justice, and the Immigration and Customs Enforcement division of the Homeland Security Department squabbled over who should be in charge of federal law enforcement effort” (Lipton).
* “Tens of thousands of New Orleanians were trapped in the Superdome and the city’s Convention Center. The Louisiana National Guard had asked FEMA for 700 buses; days later, the agency sent 100, and nearly a week had passed before the last flood survivors were herded aboard” (Horne).
* “In accordance with federal law, President George W. Bush directed the [Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Secretary_of_Homeland_Security), Michael Chertoff, to coordinate the Federal response. Chertoff designated [Michael D. Brown](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Michael_D._Brown), head of the Federal Emergency Management Agency, as the Principal Federal Official to lead the deployment and coordination of all federal response resources and forces in the Gulf Coast region. However, the President and Secretary Chertoff initially came under harsh criticism for what some perceived as a lack of planning and coordination. Brown claimed that Governor Blanco resisted their efforts and was unhelpful. Governor Blanco and her staff disputed this” (Wikipedia).
* “Since Katrina, the US, through the Army Corps of Engineers, has made a $14.45 billion investment in the area around New Orleans. Some of the projects include:
  + The world's largest water pump station ([Gulf Intracoastal Waterway West Closure Complex](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gulf_Intracoastal_Waterway_West_Closure_Complex)) which can pump 1 million US gallons (3,800 m3) per minute and will cost $1 billion.
  + Hundreds of levee and pump station improvements.
  + The [Seabrook Floodgate](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Seabrook_Floodgate), a floodgate at the connection of [Lake Ponchartrain](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lake_Ponchartrain) with the [Industrial Canal](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Industrial_Canal)” (Civil Engineering).

**Informational Research & Writing Process**

**Developing a Central Idea**

**6th grade**

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| **Causes** | **Event/Issue** | **Effects** |
|  |  |  |

**7th grade**

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| **Moment #1** | **Why are these key moments for this historical event?** |
| **Moment #2** |
| **Moment #3** |
| **Moment #4** |

**8th grade**

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| **Differences** | **Similarities** | **Differences** |
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**In 2-3 sentences, explain the central idea you recorded in the table above.**

**Finding a Structure**

**Possible Structures for Cause and Effect Essays**

A.

B.

C.

**Possible Structure for Chronological**

**Possible Structures for Compare/Contrast Essays**

**Block Format**

**Point-by-Point Format**

**Reverse Outline and Revision Plan**

**Reverse Outline**

***Why Revise?***

Taking stock of the work and thinking about what you have done in a draft will help you revise more effectively. Whether you wrote the draft yesterday or a week ago, it’s always important to return to it and read through it thoroughly to figure out what is working, what should be cut, what needs development, and how to re-organize to make your central idea more clear.

***How?***

To figure out if the content and organization of your piece are working, you will first create a reverse outline of your essay. How do you do that?

1. Read each paragraph carefully and thoroughly.
2. As you read, notice if the information included in each paragraph supports that paragraph’s topic sentence.
   1. If it does, give yourself a gold star!
   2. If it doesn’t, cross out unrelated information or make a note to revise the topic sentence.
3. Also as you read, make a note next to each paragraph that summarizes what it’s about (3 or 4 words). These notes are your topic outline.
4. Then, underline the topic sentence for that paragraph and decide if it reflects what you wrote in the margin. If your summary and the topic sentence don’t match up, put an arrow next to your topic sentence to note that it needs attention.
5. When you’ve finished reading and summarizing, go back and read through all your margin summaries. Ask yourself:
   1. Do the ideas and information flow here?
   2. What would happen if I put the paragraphs in a different order? Would my central idea be clearer?
   3. What seems to be missing?
   4. Is there anything I have spent too much time explaining?

**Revision Plan**

Take stock of what you’ll do next by making a list below or in your Writer’s Notebook of all the changes you will make to your essay. What should you do first?

**Causes and Effects of Hurricane Katrina**

from TeenInk.com

“Hurricane Katrina was one of the strongest storms to impact the coast of the United States during the last 100 years.” (“Hurricane Katrina” from NOAA) Hurricanes all start in tropical waters because they can only start in warm waters. The wind and air conditions must be just right, and once a hurricane is started it can be moved around by powerful winds. They are basically a very deadly cyclone of wind and water. They range from category 1 to category 5, with 5 being the worst. The most deadly hurricane was on September 8th, 1900 in Galveston, Texas. Hurricane Katrina was the worst storm in the past decade to hit the U.S., and caused lots of damage and got the people mad at their government.

On August 23rd 2005 the hurricane started off as a tropical depression, but the next day it became a tropical storm. Its wind speed increased from 75mph, to 80mph, to 90mph, to 125mph in a few days time period. According to an article from NCDC “…Katrina reached maximum wind speeds on the morning of Sunday August 28th of over 170mph…” (“Hurricane Katrina” from NOAA) It was very powerful and went from a category 1 to category 5 storm in 4 days. Since hurricanes form in warm waters some scientists have another reason for Hurricane Katrina’s power. “Some scientists claim that global warming is partially to blame for the power and endurance of Hurricane Katrina” due to the fact that it’s warming the oceans (“Causes and effects…” from For the People). They also need continued heat to exist and if the oceans are being heated up the endurance of hurricanes should be longer. So due to wind speed, and partially due to global warming, Hurricane Katrina had a strong impact on the U.S. coast.

New Orleans, Louisiana was the most damaged city after the hurricane. “New Orleans suffered from a large number of casualties, a lack of drinkable water, severe property damage, electrical outages and many more difficulties as a result of Hurricane Katrina.” (“Causes and effects…” from For the People) Over one million people were evacuated out of their houses, and after all of the devastation most of them had to live in the New Orleans Superdome. Most of the city was under water from flooding, including expressways and bridges to get out of the city. Almost 2 million people lost their power and had to wait several weeks for it to be restored. It was a disaster for the city. According to Morgan &amp; Morgan law firm “The estimated amount of damage that was created by Katrina was an astonishing 81 billion dollars.” (“Causes and effects…” from For the People) To this day the city is being restored, but no one knows if this once great city will ever be the same.

Another effect of Hurricane Katrina was anger towards the government. There are different reasons for people’s anger towards their local and federal government. The local government did not prepare New Orleans for a disaster like Hurricane Katrina. There were canals protecting the city from flooding, but they were not strong enough. “These walls were not intended to withstand a hurricane that was more powerful than a category 3, so Katrina easily destroyed them” according to Morgan and Morgan (“Causes and effects…” from For the People). The state should’ve prepared the city for any disaster, not just a category 3 hurricane. Also, many people were evacuated out of their homes with nowhere to live for days. Many people in Louisiana went to the New Orleans Superdome. There they found refuge, but they were there for days before they were able to leave. In addition, there were not the right materials to house all of the refugees. “…did not have the proper facilities, supplies, or law enforcement that was needed to sustain the amount of individuals who were forced to temporarily move in.” (“Causes and effects…” from For the People) The federal government was very hesitant to help the city. So many people blamed them for all of their problems, even if it was not the government’s fault.

Since Hurricane Katrina many things have changed in the cities that were affected. Many homes were destroyed and now the communities are working to rebuild their once beautiful cities. Some people just decided to move to other states, but others knew that they must restore what was destroyed. Help is coming from all over the United States. Many people have gone down to New Orleans to volunteer. Others have started charity events that help fund the reconstruction of the city. There are still chances to help out the people by donating to any charity that aids Hurricane Katrina victims.

**Works Cited**

"Causes and Effects of Hurricane Katrina." Forthepeople.com. 7 2 2011

"Hurricane Katrina." 29 12 2005. NOAA Satellite and Information Service. 4 2 2011